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A LETTER FROM JOHN LAURENS TO HIS UNCLE
JAMES LAURENS.¹

Addressed: James Laurens Esq^r.
to the Care of Mess Neufville
Bristol.

24 October, 1776.

My Dear Uncle

Last night I had the pleasure of forwarding you a letter from my Father—the substance of what he writes to me dated 14th August, is as follows, & I shall be more particular as in a P. S. of 17th. my Father mentions his being unable to write fully to you.

1st My Letters by M^r. Reid are acknowledged; that sent by way of Virginia, miscarried—Speaking of his Journey to Georgia my Father says, “at W. Savannah, B. Island, and N. Hope I found that amon^t of thirteen hundred barrels of Rice—which I caused to be removed to places less exposed—where that great value still remains—the Georgians for the most part were hearty in the Cause of Liberty, none more so than the McIntoshes—Lachlan is Colonel of a Regiment upon Continental Establishm^t his sons are Subalterns; his Brother Captain of Rangers, in a word the Country is Military.

My Negroes there are to a Man attached to me, so are all of mine in this Country—not one has attempted to desert. many hundreds of that Colour have been stolen by the Servants of K. G. 3^d. You know my Dear Son I abhor Slavery, I was born in a Country in which Slavery had been established by British parliaments and the Laws of the Country for Ages before my Existence—I found the

¹This letter contains a long quotation from a letter of Henry Laurens to his son John, and is of the same period but of later date, than the series of letters printed in volumes 3, 4, & 5 of this magazine.

Christian Religion and Slavery growing under the same Authority and Cultivation. I nevertheless dislike it— in former days there was no combatting the prejudices of Men, supported by Interest— the day I hope is approaching, when from principles of Gratitude and Justice, every Man will strive to be foremost in complying with the Golden Rule. £20000 Stg. would my Negroes produce if sold at Auction tomorrow— I am not the man who enslaved them, they are indebted to Englishmen for that favour, nevertheless I am devising means for manumitting many of them and for cutting off the Entail of Slavery, great Powers oppose me, the Laws and Customs of my Country, my own and the avarice of my Countrymen— what will my Children say if I deprive them of so much Estate? these are difficulties but not insuperable. I hope to receive your advice and Assistance in this affair in good Time.

I finish'd my Journay going round by Mepkin, and return'd the 1st. June, half an hour after I enter'd my House Intelligence was brot of the Fleet at Anchor without the Bar— Upon the tremendous Range of 55 Sail of Hostile Ships— I thought it my Duty to add to the Dignity of V. President of the Colony (now State) the several offices of Engineer, Superintendent of works, &c. I who you know had resolved never again to mount a Horse, I who thought it impossible for me to gallop five miles in a day, was seen for a month and more on the back of a lively Nag at ½ past 4 in the morning sometimes galloping 20 miles before Breakfast, and often sitting the Horse 14 Hours in 18— and I have recounted all this particularly that you may judge of my Health— The president was as active and useful as a Man could be, all except a few Tories, and a few of a worse Stamp whom I call property Men, shew'd a true Love of Country— Chas. Town was soon inclosed with Lines, trenches and Redoubts, the Wharves were clear'd of all Incumbrances, Streets barricaded, Retrenchments within, Batteries erected at practicable Landings above the Town—Thousands came in from the Country from N. Carolina and Virginia— Gen^l. Lee,

and the Brigadier Armstrong and Howe (to all of whom we are much indebted,) arrived at a Critical time— Lee was at first sight displeased with Fort Sulivant, and was for abandoning it— however that could not be done without Loss of the Stores, he advised some Amendments, gave Orders and his presence in the beginning of the Action, to which if we do not altogether owe the honor of the 28th June, we are certainly greatly indebted. At the approach of the ships, the Rampart and parapet of Ft. Johnston, where Coll^o Gadsden commanded were cover'd by Officers and Soldiers, anxious for the Sister Fortress, and ready to second her Efforts— the Batteries round the Town were mann'd, Guns loaded &c troops of Regulars and Militia properly station'd to oppose Landing, Engines at proper Places for extinguishing Fires in the Town— every appearance of a Determination to give Gen^l Grant the Lie, it was the fortune of his old Friend Will Moultrie to speak first, and he monopolized the Glory of the day. The Active was the last of the Enemy's Fleet on the Coast— she went with a Tendor to Bull's Island landed 40 white and 20 black men, kill'd by platoon firing a few head of Cattle, augmented their black Guards by stealing Six Negroes; and went off— After the Attack on Sullivant's Island seconded by the Ravages and Murders in our West Frontier by the Cherokee Indians I believe there were few Men who had not lost all Inclination for renewing our former Connexion with your King &c —

On the 2^d Inst. a Courier arrived from Philadelphia and brought a Declaration of the 4th July— by the Representatives of the 13 United Colonies, that from thence forward they should be "free and independent States;" this was proclaimed in C. Town with great Solemnity attended by a Procession of President, Councils, Genls. Assembly, Officers Civil and Military—amidst loud Acclamations of Thousands. The Sword of State which I have seen Unsheath'd in Declarations of War against France was unsheath'd and borne in a Declaration of War against Geo. 3^d.

The Indians and particularly the Cherokees had amus'd

us by Talks— but suddenly the treacherous Devils headed by White Men and push'd on by Ministerial Agents made an Inroad upon our Settlements burn'd several Houses and Murder'd about Sixty Persons chiefly Women and Children. Coll^o. Andrew Williamson in South, Brigadier Rutherford in North Carolina and a large Command in Virginia marche'd against the Savages. we are not inform'd what Rutherford and the Virginians have done—Coll^o. Williamson has driven back the Indians of the lower Townes, kill'd as many as could be come at, and has taken among prisoners no less than 15 White men— he has destroyed Senneca, Warachy, Estatohee, Keowee and Sugar Town; at the Entrance of Seneca, Coll^o. Williamson suffer'd from an Ambuscade, his Horse was kill'd under him by two Shot. M^r Salvador whose Death is universally regretted was kill'd by his side, eight Men wounded, two of whom soon died. He nevertheless rallied his Troops attack'd the Savages, and beat them out of their Town, a Town 4 Miles long, after destroying which, he proceeded on his March—

The Insurrections of the back Country have been happily quell'd, hundreds of prisoners instructed in the nature of the Dispute with the Mother Country— converted and sent home— Some of the most tenacious, and some whose Influence made them of Consequence, have freely taken the Oath of fidelity to the United Colonies, and offer'd their services as Volunteers against the Indians—

The Rev^d. M^r Cooper¹ gave offence to his Parish and has been dismiss'd— The King's officers are confined to the post Masters House—Coll^o Howarth and the Collector are at large on their Parole— W^m. Wragg remains at his Plantation. lately James Brisbane and some others who had sign'd the Association & acknowledged the Justice of the American Cause, but refus'd to do any Thing which might endanger thir *property* in case of Conquest by the English, these *Property* Men were sent to Cheraw Goal. The Success of 28th June made some Converts, and those Gentlemen in particular advanced so far as to consent to bear

¹ Rector of St. Michaels.

arms, take the Test Oath &c but still under the Obedience, to avail themselves of the Plea of Compulsion and save Property— Such Men deserve no Station of Honour on either Side— I have no pity for them, while I sincerely commiserate every suffering Candid Man tho my Enemy.

Mrs. Stuart Wife of the Cruel Superintendent who had no Pity for Innocent Women and Children in the back Country— has been set at Liberty the View of confining her being only to prevent if possible the Blow in the Back Country—”

I have just Room to add with inexpressible Joy that my dear Father has given me Leave to return, and that I am preparing to revisit my native Soil— Upon that Subject and others of great Consequence I wish to have some conversation with my Dear Uncle— and I shall make some proposals for an Interview in my next— My Love to you all from your affectionate

J. Laurens.

Well's Acco^t. of the Action is republish'd in the English papers.

M^{rs} Parsons desires as a very great Favour to have some Money advanced to her here, to be repai'd by her Brother in Carolina— She complains of being in very great Want.

Endorsed: John Laurens

London 24 Octob^r. 1776

wth Extracts from H—L's

Letter Augst 1776.